

**Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, and Aransas Rivers and Mission,
Copano, Aransas, and San Antonio Bays Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder
Committee (GSA BBASC) Meeting**

Tuesday, September 27, 2016; 10:00 a.m.
GBRA River Annex, Seguin, TX

Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Suzanne Scott, Chair; Dianne Wassenich, Vice-Chair; Julia Carrillo for Roland Ruiz; Paula DiFonzo; Josh Gray for Jay Gray; James Dodson for Ken Dunton; Charles Flatten for Jennifer Ellis; Mike Mecke; Mike Peters; James Lee Murphy; Robert Puente; Doris Cooksey; Milan Michalec; David Mauk; Jace Tunnell; Bill Braden; Steve Raabe for Con Mims; Mike Urrutia for Tommy Hill

Public Comment

No public comments were made at this time.

Discussion and Agreement on Agenda

The Agenda consists of presentations from three ongoing studies, a briefing on the upcoming legislative session, a discussion regarding representation of Guadalupe – Blanco River Authority (GBRA) on the BBASC, a conversation regarding participation and attendance for BBASC members, and a discussion of a review of the TCEQ standards.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the September 30, 2015 meeting were approved by consensus.

Briefings and Presentations from Science Teams Awarded TWDB SB3 Contracts

- 1) Assessing the Effects of Freshwater Inflows and Other Key Drivers on the Population Dynamics of Blue Crab and White Shrimp using a Multivariate Time-series Modeling Framework: Phase 2 – UTMSI
 - a) Dr. Lindsay Scheef, UTMSI, was not able to attend the meeting. She provided a handout for distribution to members. Members were encouraged to submit questions regarding the study to Cole Ruiz who would then forward questions to Dr. Scheef. The contract for the study was signed approximately six weeks ago. Dr. Scheef has started compiling data at this time.
- 2) Texas Instream Flow Program Studies – SARA, Bio-West Inc., Baylor University, Texas State University and Texas A&M University
 - a) Brad Littrell, Bio-West, provided an overview of the ongoing study funded previously and included in the current funding cycle. The overall goals of the study are to enhance the understanding of flow-ecology relationships and to

develop a sound methodology to validate the BBASC/BBEST environmental flow recommendations and TCEQ standards.

- b) 2014-2015 Study Cycle: The original project started with an expert science panel workshop in July 2014. During the workshop, the participants evaluated indicator species to validate environmental flow recommendations/standards and facilitate field site selection. In July 2014, the study team began fieldwork. In October 2014, the group held a second expert science panel workshop in which the group finalized plans for continuing fieldwork activities and refining study goals. The team submitted an interim report in November 2014 and then continued data collection for nine to twelve months. The group submitted a final report in August 2015 to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The original project focused on three ecological components: aquatics, floodplain connectivity, and riparian indicators. The team aimed to assess how flow standards support ecological functioning.
 - i) Aquatics: Dr. Tim Bonner developed 58 abiotic and biotic hypotheses. This portion of the study consisted of 74 run habitats and 63 riffle habitats. This study session sampled mostly at base flow conditions. The team was able to study some pulse flow tiers when conditions were met. The team expects that the current funding cycle will provide more sampling opportunities during pulse flow events to increase replication for high pulse tiers.
 - ii) Riparian: Dr. Jacquelyn Duke investigated seedlings, saplings, and mature trees for three indicator species: black willow; green ash; box elder. The study evaluated which riparian species and their cohorts were being inundated during pulse flow events.
 - iii) Floodplain Connectivity: Bio-west evaluated oxbow lakes in the basin and focused on fish community and connectivity. The team identified flow levels necessary to create connectivity between rivers and oxbow lakes. Fish communities were distinct in the oxbow habitats.
- c) 2015-2016 Study Cycle: The group is conducting similar studies in the Brazos and Colorado-Lavaca basins, which will aid in replication of pulse flow event results. The team conducted another expert science panel workshop on September 8th, 2016. There were approximately 40 attendees consisting of academics, river authorities, state agencies, experts, and stakeholders. Some highlights of the discussion included: possibility of investigating other species in the floodplain study (birds, amphibians, etc.); analysis of data time lag in aquatics portion; and evaluating additional data sources (SB2 data, e.g.).
 - i) Floodplain Connectivity: The team may add additional sites to the 7 sites evaluated during the previous study cycle. The team will repeat fish community sampling at multiple sites, particularly following pulse events. The team will inventory additional species within sampled habitats.
 - ii) Riparian: The riparian portion will return to the same sampling sites and do additional monitoring. The team will evaluate slight method modifications to perform additional statistical analysis. The team is dropping one sample site (Medina River at San Antonio).

- iii) Aquatics: The team plans to collect additional data to assist in replication across basins. The team is investing a variety of lag times for response variables. The team plans to examine additional SB2 data. The team is performing work in the field as flows allow.
 - d) Questions: Mike Mecke: Is the study information online for public viewing? Mr. Littrell: The report from the prior study cycle is on the TWDB website. Chair Scott: What is the schedule for the current phase? Mr. Littrell: The report is due at the end of August 2017. The team will be conducting data collection from now to July 2017. The report will be drafted in July-August 2017. This timeline will make it difficult to see the full growing season for the riparian portion. Chair Scott: Once the report is submitted, what deliverables will the team provide regarding review of the standards? Will there be any suggestions for recommendations? Ed Oborny, Bio-west: The study team is going to develop a tool that will provide a validation methodology framework. The tool will allow the BBASC to review the current standards. The team will provide examples for the BBASC on how to apply the tool to evaluate standards. The team will not evaluate the full standards for the BBASC.
- 3) Sediment Variability and Nutrient Loading into San Antonio Bay Study-United States Geologic Survey
 - a) Zulimar Lucena, USGS, provided an overview of a project aimed at determining freshwater inflow volumes to San Antonio Bay. The USGS will collect water quality data from the Guadalupe River (closest gage to San Antonio Bay) and will use existing on site instrumentation to measure changes in streamflow. Following data collection and analysis, the USGS will develop a model to assess a continuous record of suspended sediment concentrations and evaluate their relationship to nutrient concentrations. Ms. Zulimar stated that in this river basin, the water flow tends to disperse into low gradient areas, as in a delta system. In tidal areas, discharge fluctuates greatly and the index velocity gage is the most effective method to measure velocity in tidally influenced areas. This method uses acoustic doppler to evaluate discharge using velocity and area. The advantages of this method include: real time reporting; greater accuracy; use existing instrumentation that is already in place; larger sample volume; and reduced cost and maintenance. The goal going forward is to have the sediment concentrations data available online in real time.
 - b) Questions: Mr. Mecke: Has this model been tested for accuracy? Ms. Lucena: This is a very accurate model, unless water is frozen which is not a concern in this area. It is more accurate if it is calibrated with data from a variety of flow conditions. Chair Scott: What is the schedule of this study and what are the deliverables? Ms. Lucena: The USGS will provide a summary of findings in August 2017. The main objective is to provide the data and modeled results in real-time online.

Discussion Regarding the Texas 85th Legislative Regular Session and Adaptive Management Process

Chair Scott initiated a conversation regarding the upcoming legislative session. Nolan Raphelt, TWDB, informed the BBASC that there is a proposed 2 million for the

continued study of environmental flows in the TWDB budget for the upcoming legislative session. He indicated that at present the proposed budget would divide the funds equally between instream flows and freshwater inflows to bays and estuaries. Chair Scott: Is there flexibility as far as the 1 million between instream flows and bays and estuaries? Mr. Raphael: Yes, there is room for flexibility. David Mauk expressed concern regarding the attention in the legislature to the economic ability to pump groundwater, but no attention as to how this would impact environmental flows. James Dodson made a comment that he would like to see the group look at policy analysis and not just science regarding environmental flows. Mr. Dodson would like to see the groups investigate how the standards are being applied in water right permits and whether goals of the SB3 process are being met. Cindy Loeffler commented that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has seen some permits subject to standards, such as Brazos River Authority, Victoria, and GBRA. Mr. Mecke would like to see more emphasis on riparian studies, especially herbaceous cover. This is very critical for downstream sedimentation.

Chair Scott stated that the GSA BBASC recommended a 5 year timeline for review of the TCEQ standards in their work plan for adaptive management. Chair Scott asked if there have been any updates on adoption of the work plan or have any other basin groups given recommendations to the TCEQ at this time. Jade Rutledge, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), responded that the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG) have no meetings scheduled at this time and that no BBASC group has provided updated environmental flow recommendations to the TCEQ. Sam Vaughn, BBEST member, has heard discussion of possible funding to update the Water Availability Model, which would be helpful to the Environmental Flows process. The TCEQ laid out a ten year schedule for the adaptive management process. At this time, the EFAG has not met, so the ten year schedule is still in place. The BBASC plans to continue overseeing studies and moving forward with the adaptive management process.

Designate Replacement to represent the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority on the GSA BBASC

Chair Scott explained that the GBRA informed the BBASC that James Lee Murphy (a current GSA BBASC member representing the interest of River Authorities) no longer is employed by GBRA. Prior to this meeting, GBRA inquired to the process of appointing a new representative to the GSA BBASC. The members discussed that in 2008-2009, the EFAG appointed members by name to represent different stakeholder groups. Mr. Murphy was appointed at that time to represent River Authority interests. Mr. Murphy stated previously by email that he would like to continue serving as a member on the BBASC. The Committee discussed the meeting rules whether they require removing a member if the member no longer represents the stakeholder group they were originally appointed for. The vote to remove a member requires 75% of the full BBASC, which were not in attendance at the meeting. However, members were of the opinion that additional members can be added to represent the SB3 designated stakeholder groups and the precedent has been that the group has chosen to include particular entities, such as GBRA, on the BBASC. Jonathan Stinson, Deputy General Manager of GBRA, made a statement to the BBASC, requesting that a GBRA staff member, Tommy Hill, be voted

on as a member of the committee to represent River Authority interests. Mr. Stinson requested that Mike Urrutia would serve as Mr. Hill's alternate. Vice-Chair Dianne Wassenich stated that she believes her representation of Public Interests is contingent on her employment with the San Marcos River Foundation. A member asked for clarification on adding an additional member to the committee. Brian Mast stated that he believes there is no ceiling on membership numbers as long as all interests specified in statute are represented. Mr. Mauk indicated that a quorum is in attendance and can add an additional member. He also stated that Mr. Murphy has knowledge and experience that will continue to benefit the BBASC. Mr. Mauk motioned to add Tommy Hill as a River Authority representative. Members voted in the affirmative to add Tommy Hill to the BBASC with Mike Urrutia as the alternate. Vice-Chair Wassenich asked what stakeholder group Mr. Murphy would then represent since he had changed employment. Doris Cooksey stated she was concerned with the balance of interests on the BBASC, especially with voting issues and that even if she left her position with CPS Energy, she would still have knowledge and would have bias towards interests for the sector. Mr. Murphy stated he had no such bias and that that membership on the BBASC is individual in nature and not contingent on employment. He expressed he has the knowledge and experience to serve the BBASC going forward and feels that he can represent stakeholders adequately. A member also added that other river authorities may want to be involved with the BBASC, such as Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA), etc., and that the headwaters of the basin have different needs than the coastal area. Members agree that the conversation of balanced representation is crucial for the success of the BBASC.

Discussion Regarding BBASC Membership and Participation

Chair Scott initiated a discussion regarding BBASC attendance for meetings. If attendance is low, some interests are not being actively represented on the committee, such as free range livestock, commercial fishing, and recreational water users. Many members were appointed in 2008-2009. By statute, the members serve 5 year terms, but in actuality the members are serving until they are replaced. Chair Scott discussed that the BBASC may need to refresh membership. Members were in agreement to send letters to members encouraging them to re-commit to the BBASC or resign if they are no longer interested in serving. The Chair and Vice-Chair positions could also be reevaluated. Ray Buck, UGRA, requests consideration of adding a representative from the upper basin. Chair Scott stated that BBASC will be reevaluating the group and the balance of stakeholders in the future. Vice-Chair Wassenich said it is crucial to open the stakeholder member position for those who have lost interest to someone who wants to serve and participate. In the BBASC rules, members are eligible for removal after missing four consecutive meetings. Sam Vaughn, BBEST, mentioned that the BBEST terms have expired as well.

Agenda Items for Future Consideration and Next Meeting Date, Time and Location

The target for the next meeting is December 2016, to ensure that the BBASC has time to send out letters, receive responses, and open nominations. The committee may need to conduct some of the recommitment process through email. All BBASC members are

encouraged to attend the next meeting to ensure a quorum to elect potential new members. A doodle poll will be initiated to assess availability.

Public Comment

No public comments were made at this time.

Adjourn